

Unconditional Surrender! Case Blue

We all have a game like this in our collection. A game which makes you think: ‘I really need to start playing this one day!’. For me this game was Unconditional Surrender! Case Blue. This game was part of RBM Studio’s C3i#28 from 2014. Unconditional Surrender! World War 2 in Europe by GMT Games is a well received game, out of print, but with a 2nd edition in the reprint pipeline. This Case Blue scenario allows you, in part, to get a taste of this game system.

Obviously the ‘full game’ has many parts and rules that are not shown in this mini-game. But this game will show you how to move and fight. And it is not easy for the Axis forces to win the game. Because of this, and despite the small area in use, the game is still interesting for repeated play.

Components

The game has a twenty page rulebook which includes the scenarios. Overall the rules are clear and some examples of play are included. The small map (8.5” x 11”) covers the line from Kursk to Kharkov in the west and from Saratov to Grozny in the east. In the southwest you will find the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. There is also a small Weather Track printed on the map. The game uses eighty counters and three player aid cards. One of them contains a Sequence of Play Flowchart, another the Turn Record Track and a couple of other tracks for administrative purposes. The third card has a number of charts and tables and a Combat Results Table (CRT), surrounded by several ‘block’ stating the die roll modifiers used.

Uh?

Once you start setting up the game, you will immediately notice one thing: there are no values, like a movement or combat factor, on the counters.

What’s this?

The counters used depict the units at the army level, and only show you if they are a mechanized or infantry unit. The flag and color of the counter show you to what country it belongs, be it Russian, German, Italian, Hungarian, or Rumanian. Movement and combat are driven by production points, which are tracked on the Production Track. It costs one production point to activate an infantry unit (two if mechanized). Receiving reinforcements or mobilizing units will cost you production points too. Depending on the supply situation an infantry unit can use eight movement points, a mechanized unit ten. You keep track of the costs on the well laid out player aid card. The Russians, obviously, have the highest number of production points, the Italians and Hungarians the least, something you need to factor in as the Axis player. Now you can use the movement points to move and fight. Attacking an enemy unit costs movement points to enter the enemy hex, sometimes more, depicted as +?. This depends on the situation at hand. Air force units use sorties. A marker is used to keep track of the available sorties, which can be used to support combat. If the unit has used six sorties, it is out of sorties and can no longer be used. You will need to use production points to replenish the available sorties.

One CRT to rule them all

Where many boardwargames use one Combat Results Table, this game uses one table for both ground and air combat. By applying the applicable modifiers the result of the combat will be established. Players can also make use of ‘Event’ markers, which modify the die roll. Using these markers you can try and trick your opponent. The two counters, each player has one, are placed face-down in front of the players, either on its ‘Will Commit’ or ‘Will not Commit’ side. This way the players will have to guess if their opponent is using an event to influence the die roll or just bluffing.

If a combat takes place, players will first have to decide to use an Event or not. If both sides decide to use their air force, air combat will be resolved first. Next both players determine which modifiers need to be applied to the combat. To track this, a convenient DRM Track and matching marker can be used. Then both players roll a die and the established modifier gets applied. On the CRT the result is established and applied. Options are: an attack can be stopped, elimination, or losses are applied. Rather classic.

Conclusion

I am not much into strategic games, but am sold now.

Text: **Hans Korting**

Rating: ***** **

In short: Nice, surprising game, want to see more of this